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SHORT TIMER'S TOUR

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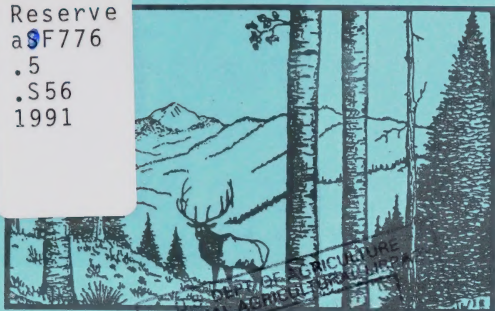


ILLUSTRATION BY DEBBIE PITTMAN

Mileage: 21 miles

Time: 1 to 2 hours

CATALOGING PREP



Are you looking for something leisurely to do after a full day of recreational activities? The Short Timer's Tour is designed for that purpose. At a total of 21 miles round trip, the tour is the perfect way to end a busy day while offering the opportunity to view wildlife.

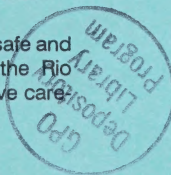
WHAT TO BRING:

Camera and binoculars! A bird book will be helpful, and a fishing rod and license is a must for any fisherman.

Whatever your interest, have a safe and enjoyable time while touring the Rio Grande National forest and drive carefully.



10 MAR 1992
Del Norte Ranger District
RIO GRANDE NATIONAL FOREST



FISH

The fisherman can catch rainbow, brook, cutthroat, and brown trout in the area. For the spin fisherman, both Big Meadows Reservoir and Shaw Lake provide fishing and fun, while local streams often fill a skilled fly-fisherman's creel.

Hunter's Lake occasionally produces 4-6 pound cutthroat trout, but getting them to hit is the trick.



ELK and DEER

The big game enthusiast might spot both elk and mule deer along the tour. The tour passes through a scenic creek at the lower end, aspen trees in the middle, and dense spruce and fir trees at the top. All of which are used by elk and deer.

The mule deer is easily identified by its relatively big ears - in comparison to body size - and characteristic hopping movement when frightened.



WILDLIFE

Illustrations courtesy of Cathy Sims
and the Division of Wildlife



YELLOW-BELLIED MARMOT

Marmots, otherwise known as ground-hogs, woodchucks, whistlepigs, and rockchucks are widespread throughout the forest, but for the person who has not seen one yet, this is a good place. Marmots can be seen all along the tour, but the upper reaches will probably be best. Marmots frequent logged areas with downed timber. They can be seen running in and out of log piles. These vegetarians are actually large squirrels that reach up to 10 pounds. They have a yellowish-brown back with a yellow belly.



CHIPMUNKS and GROUND SQUIRRELS

These two creatures are the cause to some confusion because of their similar appearance. The ground squirrel has two light stripes on its back but lacks stripes on the side of its face, while the chipmunk has four light stripes on its back and a light stripe above and below each eye.

There is an easily detectable size difference between the two also, with the chipmunk being much smaller than the ground squirrel.



PINE MARTEN

These secretive creatures are rarely seen but are in the area. They look like long, thin, dark weasels and are seen along rock piles or under logs. Martens prey on small mammals, such as squirrels and voles, but will take birds, eggs, amphibians, fish, and insects when available.



DUCKS

Mallards are prevalent on both Big Meadows Reservoir and Shaw Lake. Drakes, male ducks, are easily distinguished from hens, female ducks, by their coloration. The males are brightly colored with a metallic green head and neck, white collar, and brown breast. Like most hens, mallard hens are drably colored which camouflages the hens to protect the chicks.

Other duck species can also be seen, but mallards are the most common.



BIRDS

The difference in vegetation along the way also reflects a variety of bird life within it. The bird advocate could see various kinds of warblers, sapsuckers, jays, hawks, woodpeckers, eagles, bluebirds, swallows, and sparrows. A bird book would be helpful along the tour.

SCENERY AND VEGETATION:

Even if you don't see wildlife on this tour, you will still enjoy it. The scenery is beautiful as you pass rocky cliffs with beautiful streams beneath them, mountain lakes panoramically enhanced with the Continental Divide and the Weminuche Wilderness, and roads lined with aspen, spruce and fir trees. You will also see flowers such as scarlet gilia, lupine, honeysuckle, bittercrest, and columbine.

Aside from the beautiful drive, the 1/2 mile hike into Hunter's Lake is well worth it for the scenery.

The avid hiker will find a number of trail heads along this road, most of which wind through the wilderness tying into other trails. These trails vary in difficulty, but all exhibit spectacular scenery.

THE ROUTE:

The tour begins on Forest Road 410 off of Hwy 160, 12 miles south of South Fork, CO. and ends 11 miles later at the edge of the Weminuche Wilderness. There is a fork in the road before reaching Big Meadows Campground. Take the turn off to the right on Forest Road #430 toward Shaw Lake. You will pass some lakes and creeks in the area as well as some trail heads that lead into the Weminuche Wilderness.

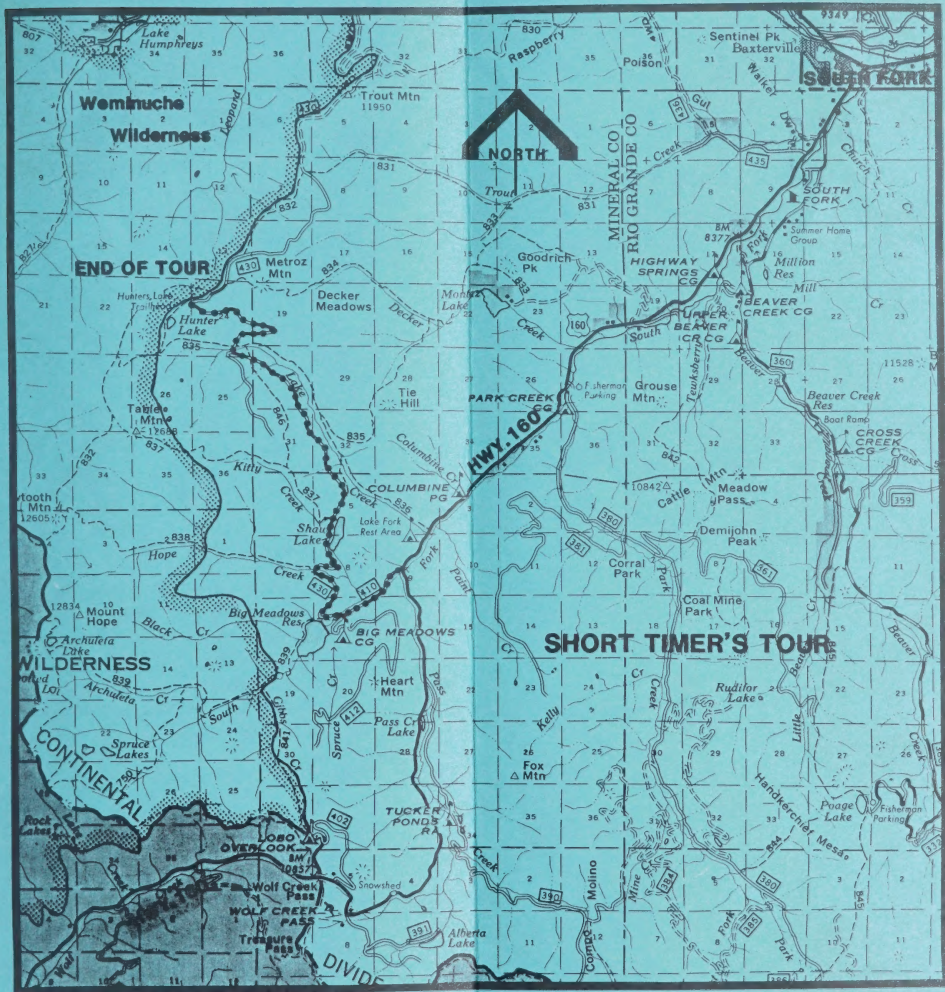


INFORMATION . . .

For more information regarding wildlife on the Rio Grande National Forest, contact the Del Norte Ranger District at (719) 657-3321, or stop by the office on Highway 160.

WELCOME TO THE RIO GRANDE NATIONAL FOREST

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